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Jordan Lake in Chatham County has almost 14,000 acres of water to slake the thirst of many Central North Carolina residents. But the lake also has serious problems with pollution, much of it caused by treated wastewater dumped into it by cities in the region.

The aim ought to be less pollution to better protect this finite public resource.

That goal comes closer with a smart pilot project announced by U.S. Rep. David Price of Chapel Hill. Price has secured a \$1.5 million federal grant that will help build a pipeline to redirect up to 2 million gallons of treated wastewater a day for use in industrial-sized air conditioning units and for irrigation.

The project will make available all of that treated wastewater to irrigate lawns and other landscaping -- natural assets that help filter out the nitrogen and phosphorus that can cause algae blooms in waterways. The water will also be put to use in the chillers of big RTP industrial sites that need water for air conditioning.

Taxpayers will save on the expense of reducing pollution in a major drinking water supply. And municipalities will save significantly by not having to provide drinking-quality water just to spray on thirsty lawns. Cary has been saving money with a similar water recycling plan for irrigation since 2001.

The total project will cost \$15.8 million, to be shared by the federal government, Cary, and Durham and Wake counties.

It shapes up as money well spent, with the prospect of immediate environmental benefits and of long-term savings to the public.

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